

Exploring Similarity Characteristics, Identification, and Parasocial Interactions in Choice of Celebrities

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Parasocial interactions (PSIs), or perceived intimate relationships with favorite performers, were compared with *celebrity identification*, which is when spectators want to model or emulate a celebrity. College students ($N = 188$) completed an online questionnaire where they identified their favorite celebrity, answered demographic questions, and completed measures on celebrity PSIs and celebrity identification. As predicted, participants reported greater PSI than identification with their favorite celebrities, and participant gender and age were significantly related to celebrity gender and age. However, choice of celebrity was not based on race of celebrity and participant. Also, having lower PSI scores, greater celebrity identification, and being female significantly predicted choosing a female celebrity. But, having lower PSI scores, greater celebrity identification, and being older significantly predicted choosing an older celebrity. Implications and limitations of the study are discussed.

Keywords: parasocial interactions, identification, similarity-attraction principle

If fan clubs, fan conventions, and fan websites are any indication, people feel very strongly about their favorite celebrities. Not only do people follow and admire their favorite actor, athlete, musician, or writer, these fans spend millions of dollars on merchandise, concerts, movies, and sporting events that involve their favorite celebrity (Maughan, 1998; Rische, Mondello, & Boyle, 2014). Therefore, understanding fan attitudes can be of benefit for many groups, including advertisers, merchandisers, promoters, and the celebrities themselves. However, whom fans choose as their favorite celebrity is not easily predictable. Are fans' choices a function of similarity characteristics, identification with the celebrity, parasocial interactions (PSIs) with the celebrity, or all three? According to Cohen (2001), *identification* with media characters means sharing the character's perspective and to feel what the character feels. Identification with media characters has been examined in the literature, but researchers have sometimes used the term "wishful identifica-

tion" interchangeably with identification (Hoffner, 1996; Hoffner & Buchanan, 2005). Wishful identification involves wanting to be like and behave in ways similar to the media figure (Hoffner, 1996). However, Moyer-Gusé (2008) argues that wishful identification is the fan wanting to be more like the media figure, whereas identification is an emotional and cognitive process in which the fan takes on the role of the character portrayed by the media figure. Moyer-Gusé's definition of identification is similar to Cohen's distinction that identifying with a media character involves an increasing loss of self-awareness as the individual develops emotional and cognitive connections with a character (Cohen, 2001). For the purposes of the present study, Moyer-Gusé (2008) and Cohen's (2001) definition of identification will be used.

In contrast, when an individual reacts to media characters in terms of attachment and attraction to these characters, this experience is defined as PSI (Giles, 2002). As individuals are continually exposed to their favorite media figures, they may develop PSI relationships, or a sense of intimacy, in which they feel they know their celebrity because of the variety of information the media provides regarding the celebrity (Basil, 1996). However, PSI is different from celebrity identification because the perceivers may not want to emulate or model the

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celebrity's behaviors in their own lives. In PSI, the intimacy and perceived relationship they have with their media figure do not go beyond the TV, movie, or event (Brown & de Matviuk, 2010).

The term *parasocial interaction* was first coined by Horton and Wohl (1956), who described the concept as part of viewers' experiences when watching or listening to performers. The intimate relationship that is perceived between the spectator and the performer is an illusion, but nonetheless, the PSI that results from this perception can create strong feelings of attachment and attraction toward the performer (Giles, 2002; Horton & Wohl, 1956). Some studies have examined whether having performers directly address audience members increases PSI (Hartmann & Goldhoorn, 2011) or whether the type of media used influences PSI (Schramm & Wirth, 2010). Regardless of the specific factors that may affect them, PSIs describe a one-sided form of communication and interaction between the viewer and the celebrity (Schramm & Wirth, 2010).

The Similarity-Attraction Principle

The similarity-attraction principle states that individuals find others who are similar to them (e.g., physically, in background, interests, and personality) attractive because they are more familiar (Fiske, 2014, p. 284). According to Moyer-Gusé (2008), identification and perceived similarity differ in that similarity involves assessing the characteristics the viewer has in common with the media figure, while identification involves empathy and loss of awareness.

The similarity-principle of attraction has been studied in a variety of contexts. For example, Caprara, Vecchione, Barbaranelli, and Fraley (2007) sampled 1,675 Italian voters and 6,094 American voters, measuring self-descriptions of their personality traits and the perceptions of politicians in their respective countries. The researchers found that voters choose politicians whom they perceived as most similar to themselves in terms of personality traits. Also, Klohnen and Luo (2003) found that among 751 college students perceived self-similarity with others, with regard to adult attachment style, was related to attraction. That is, individuals

find others more attractive if the other has a similar view regarding relationships.

Individuals may be attracted to media figures that are similar in other ways besides personality and attachment style. For example, in a study of 236 college students, Harwood (1999) found that participants preferred TV shows that featured characters similar to them in age. According to Harwood, participants achieve social identity gratifications and improved self-concept by identifying with similar media figures that are similar in age to the participant. Also, perceivers are attracted to targets based on similarities in gender (Cattarin, Thompson, Thomas, & Williams, 2000; Jones, 2001; Smith & Whitehead, 1986). However, many of the studies examining individuals' attraction to same-gender targets conceptualize the attraction in terms of the social comparison framework (Cattarin et al., 2000; Jones, 2001). The social comparison framework is different than the similarity-attraction principle in that the perceiver evaluates the target and also themselves based on their perception of the target. Specifically, researchers using the social comparison framework have shown that physically attractive same-sex models can negatively impact self-perceptions and eating pathology of perceivers, especially among women (Cattarin et al., 2000; Warren, Schoen, & Schafer, 2010). What these social comparison studies don't emphasize is the viewer's physical characteristics (e.g., gender, ethnicity, and age) and their relationship to choice of media figure.

The Similarity-Attraction Principle and Media Figures

The physical characteristics of media figures can influence perceivers' choice of the media figure. For instance, Hoffner (1996) found that the over 90% of boys in their sample chose male TV characters as their favorite character more often than female characters; however, only about 50% of the girls chose female TV characters over male characters. A limitation of the study is that Hoffner did not measure participant identification or PSI with the TV characters and only TV characters were examined. In terms of similarities in ethnicity, Liss (1981) found that among third and sixth graders, children were more likely to choose TV programs that had same-race characters as the children than pro-

grams that had different race characters. However, Liss' study is limited in that only TV programs were presented to the children and the children did not choose their own favorite media figure. Also, Liss only studied African American/Black and European American/White children. Furthermore, participant identification and PSI with the TV characters were not explored.

Among college students, Hoffner and Buchanan (2005) found that participants chose fictional TV characters that were similar to them in both gender and ethnicity. However, similar to Liss' (1981) study, a limitation of Hoffner and Buchanan's (2005) study is that participants were restricted to choosing only TV characters. Also, Hoffner and Buchanan's sample was not ethnically diverse (84.6% European American/White participants); the researchers did not explore age similarities between the TV character and the participants, and identification and PSI with the TV characters were not measured.

Based on the findings above, physical similarity (e.g., gender, ethnicity, age) between the fan and the media figure is important in choice of favorite figure. However, the characteristics of gender, ethnicity, and age have not been examined together with identification, and have not been investigated beyond TV characters. A variety of media figures should be considered in order to generalize identification beyond TV characters.

Parasocial Interaction and the Similarity-Attraction Principle

PSI has been examined in the communication and psychological literature more extensively than identification with media figures (Giles, 2002; Hartmann & Goldhoorn, 2011; Schramm & Wirth, 2010; Theran, Newberg, & Gleason, 2010) because PSIs are believed to be a more common and normal part of social activity than celebrity identification (Giles, 2002; Horton & Wohl, 1956). Furthermore, PSI has been found among a variety of populations, including adolescents (Theran et al., 2010), young adults, and middle-aged adults (Schramm & Wirth, 2010). Not only do people develop PSI for media figures whom they rate high on physical attraction (Hartmann & Goldhoorn, 2011), they also have stronger PSI for media figures they deem high on task attraction, which is the perception

of the media figure's ability to perform their specialized task, such as acting, dancing, singing, or writing (Rubin & McHugh, 1987). Individuals also develop PSI for disliked media figures; however, the intensity of PSIs is greater for liked characters (Dibble & Rosaen, 2011).

Derrick, Gabriel, and Tippin (2008) investigated PSIs and perceived similarity among low self-esteem students in a series of studies. Their first study found that low self-esteem students thought their favorite celebrities were similar to the attributes they described as their "ideal self." Their second study revealed that low self-esteem students who were primed to think about their favorite celebrity reported greater attribute similarities between their "actual self" and ideal self, demonstrating improved self-esteem. Finally, the researchers showed that favorite celebrities were more powerful in mediating the effect on their views of self than a close relationship partner or a control celebrity. These findings indicate that favorite celebrities are seen as sharing aspects of what individuals view as their ideal self and their "real self," which in some ways supports the similarity-attraction principle. However, Derrick et al. did not explore the role of PSIs on fans' choice of their favorite celebrity. Also, they did not focus on physical characteristics that were similar between the participant and the celebrity.

Parasocial Interactions, Identification, and Similarity

Studies have compared both identification and PSI for media figures. For example, Brown (2009) found that PSI and identification for Pope John Paul II was positively related among individuals seeking information on the Internet following the Pope's death. Brown also found that respondents who had similar views as the Pope also had greater PSI with the Pope. A strength of Brown's study was that the sample consisted of individuals who were seeking information about the Pope, and, therefore, had strong interest regarding this media figure. However, a limitation of the study is that not much is known about the extent of knowledge and interest respondents had for the Pope compared with a favorite media celebrity of their choosing. Also, physical similarities with the media figure (such as gender, ethnicity, and age) were not explored.

Brown and de Matviuk (2010) also studied PSI and identification; however, they examined the influence of the Argentinian international soccer star, Diego Maradona, who was reported by the media to have ongoing struggles with drug abuse. The researchers found that male respondents had greater PSI and identification for Maradona than female respondents, and that, overall, participants had greater PSI for Maradona than identification. The findings make sense in light of the fact that soccer is a male-dominated sport and that fans were interested in the soccer star, but did not necessarily want to emulate him (Brown & de Matviuk, 2010). Although Brown and de Matviuk examined both PSI and identification for a media figure, a limitation of the study is that participants did not select their own favorite celebrity and the study utilized only one item to measure participants' knowledge about Maradona and his drug problems.

Additionally, Brown, Basil, and Bocarnea (2003) examined PSI and identification, but focused on how these two phenomena influenced health beliefs regarding steroids in light of the controversy surrounding steroid use by American baseball player, Mark McGwire. Results from their study showed that greater PSI was related to greater identification with Mark McGwire. Also, greater identification with the baseball star also predicted greater support for child abuse prevention, which is a cause McGwire supports. Greater celebrity identification with McGwire also predicted greater awareness of and interest in the steroid Androstenedione, which McGwire used during his time as an athlete. Brown et al.'s study showed the relationship between PSI and identification, but again, like Brown and de Matviuk's (2010) study, a limitation of Brown et al.'s study is that participants did not select their own favorite athlete or media figure. Additionally, physical similarities between the respondents and McGwire, specifically ethnicity and age, were not assessed. Furthermore, Brown et al. did not empirically demonstrate that the PSI and identification were distinctly different, but did show that they were highly correlated and overlap.

As demonstrated earlier, identification and PSIs have been studied in the literature. However, not much is known about how PSI and identification relate to whom individuals choose as their favorite celebrities. Also, few studies

have compared the identification and PSI in relation to the physical similarities of gender, ethnicity, and age between the fan and the celebrity.

Present Study's Hypotheses

The present study attempts to answer several research questions. First, do participants have greater PSI or greater celebrity identification for their favorite celebrity? Based on findings that PSIs can be considered a normal part of social behaviors (Dibble & Rosaen, 2011; Horton & Wohl, 1956; Rubin & McHugh, 1987) and can occur for even disliked figures (Dibble & Rosaen, 2011), the first hypothesis predicts that PSIs with favorite celebrities will be greater than identification with favorite celebrities.

Second, do perceived gender, ethnic, and age similarities with a celebrity predict choice of favorite celebrity? Harwood (1999) found that choosing particular media figures to watch is predicted by age-groups, and Hoffner (1996) found that gender of a TV character influenced children's choice of favorite character. Liss (1981) also found that children preferred same-race characters over different race characters. Additionally, Hoffner and Buchanan (2005) found that gender and ethnicity similarities between participants and fictional TV characters influenced their choice of characters. However, these studies have not allowed participants to choose their own media figure. Therefore, the second hypothesis in the present study is that: 2a) individuals will choose favorite celebrities who are similar to themselves in gender; 2b) individuals will choose favorite celebrities who are similar to themselves in ethnicity; and, 2c) individuals will choose favorite celebrities who are similar to themselves in age.

Finally, the last research question posed in this study is can PSI, identification, and participant characteristics (i.e., gender, ethnicity, and age) predict the gender, ethnicity, and age of the favorite celebrity chosen? Although no studies have examined all of these factors together, given the research findings above it is hypothesized that PSI, celebrity identification, and participant characteristics (i.e., gender, ethnicity, and age) will influence choice of celebrity. Specifically, greater PSI, greater celebrity identification, and participant age will predict celebrity age (criterion variable). Also, greater PSI,

greater celebrity identification, and participant gender will predict celebrity gender (criterion variable). Third, greater PSI, greater celebrity identification scores, and participant ethnicity will predict celebrity ethnicity.

Method

Participants

Undergraduates ($N = 188$) from a small private university in Southern California were conveniently sampled from introductory and other psychology courses. Participants completed an online survey regarding attitudes toward celebrities. The 139 females and 49 males had an average age of 21.10 (Median = 19.0; $SD = 5.12$). The sample was mostly composed of Latino/Hispanic individuals (43.1%; $n = 81$) and Caucasian/White participants (31.4%; $n = 59$).

Measures

Using an online survey, participants completed several measures. First, based on the definition provided by Ashe and McCutcheon (2001) regarding favorite celebrities, participants identified their "favorite celebrity" by choosing a famous living person or a famous person who died during the participant's lifetime, whom they admired. Participants typed their answers. Actors (39.4%; $n = 74$) and musicians/singers (31.4%; $n = 59$) were chosen most often as favorite celebrity. Male celebrities ($n = 109$) were chosen more often than female celebrities ($n = 79$). Also, 135 of the celebrities were European American/White, 34 were African American/Black, 7 Latino/Hispanic, and 4 Asian American/Asian, and 8 "other" race or ethnicity (including Italian, Albanian, Swiss, Swedish, and mixed race). The average age of the favorite celebrities was 38.29 ($SD = 12.35$, Range = 19 to 105 years old). The 188 participants in the study named 132 different celebrities, with Taylor Swift ($n = 9$), Johnny Depp ($n = 6$), and Sandra Bullock ($n = 6$) being the three most often named favorite celebrities, with all other celebrities cited less frequently ($n \leq 5$). Participants also completed the 20-item Celebrity-Persona Identification (CPI) Scale (Brown & Bocarnea, 2007), the 20-item Celebrity-Persona Parasocial Interaction Scale (CPPI;

Bocarnea & Brown, 2007), and four demographic questions (i.e., gender, ethnicity, age, and work status).

The CPI Scale (Brown & Bocarnea, 2007) assesses the degree that an individual derives a sense of identity based on their desire to adopt the behavior and attitudes of the celebrity. Responses on the 20-item scale are based on a 5-point Likert format, with 1 being *strongly disagree* to 5 being *strongly agree*. Scores can range from 20 to 100, with higher scores indicating stronger identification with the celebrity. In the present study's sample, the mean CPI score was 52.44 ($SD = 15.81$). Previous studies show that CPI scores demonstrate good reliability (Bocarnea, 2001), with Cronbach's alpha coefficients greater than .87. In the present study, Cronbach's alpha coefficient for scores the scale was .96.

The CPPI Scale (Bocarnea & Brown, 2007) measures the imaginary relationships that individuals form with their favorite celebrities. Responses on the 20-item CPPI are based on a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 being *strongly disagree* and 5 being *strongly agree*. Scores can range from 20 to 100, with higher scores indicating stronger perceived relationships with the celebrity. Three items are reverse-coded (items 8, 18, and 20). In the present study's sample, the mean CPPI score was 60.72 ($SD = 12.59$). Brown and de Matviuk (2010) demonstrated that CPPI scores had good reliability (Cronbach's alpha = .92), although they used a shortened version of the scale that had 15 items. Brown (2009) also used a shortened 12-item version of the CPPI and found scores on the shortened CPPI reliable (Cronbach's alpha = .96). In the present study, the 20-item CPPI showed strong scale reliability (Cronbach's alpha = .91).

Physical similarities between the respondent and the celebrity figure that was chosen were determined by the demographic questions of gender, ethnicity, and age for the respondent, and the published gender, ethnicity, and age of the celebrity, using the Google Search engine.

Procedure

Using a snowball sampling procedure, e-mails were sent to university club organizations to send the survey website link to anyone they knew who would be interested. Some students completed

the study as part of course credit or extra credit offered by their instructor. Also, participants could enter a drawing to win one of four \$15 movie theater gift certificates by e-mailing their information to a separate e-mail address created for the raffle. Participants completed the survey by following the link to the study's website that included a consent form and the measures. The first screen provided information about the study, instructed participants of their rights, and listed contact information of the researcher. Participants who agreed to continue with the study clicked a button marked "Agree." If they did not agree to continue, they were taken to the end of the survey that was a page thanking them for their participation. No names or student identification numbers were collected. Completion of the measures took approximately 20 min. Data were obtained between Fall 2011 and Fall 2012.

Results

Bivariate Analyses

To determine potential intervening variables of the participant, independent sample *t* tests were conducted to test differences between male and female respondents regarding PSI and identification. Males ($M = 57.02$, $SD = 17.23$) had significantly higher identification scores than females ($M = 50.83$, $SD = 15.01$) in the sample, $t(186) = 2.38$, $p = .018$. However, males ($M = 63.51$, $SD = 13.61$) and females ($M = 59.74$, $SD = 12.12$) did not differ on PSIs, $t(186) = 1.81$, $p = .07$. One-way ANOVA tests were conducted to determine differences in identification and PSI scores among the ethnic groups in the sample. Results showed no significant differences in either identification, $F(4, 183) = .319$, $p = .86$, or PSI scores for ethnic groups, $F(4, 183) = .553$, $p = .70$. Finally, Pearson correlation results showed no significant relationship between respondent age ($M = 21.10$, $SD = 5.12$) and identification scores ($M = 52.44$, $SD = 15.81$), $r = -.005$, $p = .95$. There was also no significant relationship between respondent age and PSI scores ($M = 60.72$, $SD = 12.59$), $r = -.08$, $p = .28$. Based on these bivariate results, participant gender, ethnicity, and age were not intervening variables.

Hypothesis Testing

To test the first hypothesis that PSIs will be greater than identification with favorite celebrities, a Pearson correlation and a paired samples *t* test were conducted. Results showed that scores on the identification measure (CPI; $M = 52.44$, $SD = 15.81$) are positively correlated with scores on the PSI measure (CPPI; $M = 60.72$, $SD = 12.59$), $r = .75$, $p < .001$; however, the two scores when compared were significantly different for each participant, $t(187) = -10.89$, $p < .001$. Overall, individuals reported greater PSIs than identification with celebrities, which supports the first hypothesis and previous literature (Brown et al., 2003).

To test hypotheses 2a, 2b, and 2c that predicted individuals choose favorite celebrities based on physical characteristics similar to themselves, Pearson chi-square tests for independence and a Pearson correlation were performed to assess relationships between physical characteristics of the participants and the favorite celebrity. For hypothesis 2a, gender of the participant and gender of the celebrity were significantly related, $\chi^2(1, N = 188) = 17.96$, $p < .001$, $\Phi = .309$. Males participants ($n = 49$) were more likely to choose male celebrities (82.6%) over female celebrities (17.4%); however, female participants ($n = 139$) chose between male (49.3%) and female (50.7%) celebrities almost equally. However, for hypothesis 2b, there was no relationship between celebrity's ethnicity, and the participant's ethnicity, $\chi^2(16, N = 188) = 21.43$, $p = .162$, $\Phi = .338$. European American/White participants ($n = 59$) chose European American/White celebrities (79.7%) most often, but other ethnic groups also chose European American/White celebrities more often than other celebrity ethnic groups. Specifically, Latino participants ($n = 81$), African American/Black participants ($n = 14$), and "other" ethnic participants ($n = 22$) chose European American/White celebrities more than other celebrity ethnic groups (72.8%, 64.3%, and 68.2%, respectively). Yet, Asian American participants ($n = 12$) chose African American/Black celebrities more than other types of celebrities (58.3%). Finally, for hypothesis 2c, participant age ($M = 21.10$, $SD = 5.12$) was significantly related to celebrity age ($M = 38.29$, $SD = 12.35$), $r = .52$, $n = 187$,

$p < .001$. Thus, the second hypothesis was partially supported.

To test the last hypothesis that PSI, identification, and participant characteristics predict choice of celebrities, several multiple logistic and multiple regression analyses were performed. First, a binary logistic regression was performed on whether participants would choose a female celebrity (coded as 1) over a male celebrity (coded as 0) and three predictors: PSI, celebrity identification, and participant gender (coded 0 = male and 1 = female). There were a total of 79 participants who chose female celebrities and 109 participants who chose male celebrities. A test of the full model with the three predictors against a constant-only model was statistically reliable, $\chi^2(3, N = 188) = 38.39, p < .001$, indicating that the predictors reliably distinguished between individuals who chose female celebrities and individuals who did not. The variance in choice is moderate, with Cox and Snell R^2 equal to .19 and Nagelkerke R^2 equal to .25. Predicted success was adequate, with 76.1% of the participants who chose male celebrities and 64.6% of the participants who chose female celebrities identified correctly and an overall success rate of 71.3%. Table 1 shows the regression coefficients, Wald statistics, statistical significances, and odds ratios for each of the three predictors. According to the Wald criteria, PSIs, celebrity identification, and participant gender predicted choosing a female celebrity. For every one point decrease in PSI participants were .95 times more likely to choose a female celebrity. Also, for every one point increase in celebrity identification score participants were 1.074 times more likely to choose a female celebrity. Finally, female participants had an 8.71 times greater chance to choose a female celebrity than male participants. See Table 1 for regression

coefficients, Wald statistics, statistical significances, and odd ratios for each predictor.

To test the relationship regarding the role of PSI, identification, and participant ethnicity in predicting celebrity ethnicity, several binary logistic regression analyses were conducted. For each logistic regression the ethnicities of celebrity and participant were coded one ethnic group at a time (i.e., "European American/White" or "Non-White," "African American/Black" or "Non-Black," "Asian American/Asian" or "Non-Asian," "Latino/Hispanic" or "Non-Latino," and "Other Ethnicities" or "White, Black, Asian, Latino"). Results showed that PSI, identification, and participant ethnicity did not predict choice of European American/White celebrities, $\chi^2(3, N = 188) = 4.75, p = .191$, African American celebrities, $\chi^2(3, N = 188) = 1.37, p = .713$, Latino/Hispanic celebrities, $\chi^2(3, N = 188) = 1.66, p = .645$, Asian American/Asian celebrities, $\chi^2(3, N = 188) = 3.62, p = .305$, or "other" ethnic celebrities, $\chi^2(3, N = 188) = 2.08, p = .556$.

Finally, results from a linear multiple regression test showed that PSI, celebrity identification, and participant age did significantly predict age of favorite celebrity, $R^2 = .29, R^2_{adj} = .29, F(3, 183) = 25.99, p < .001$, with approximately 30% of the variance accounted for by the model. Specifically, lower PSI scores ($B = -.240, t = -2.59, p = .01$), higher identification scores ($B = .154, t = 2.09, p = .038$), and older age of participant ($B = 1.21, t = 8.08, p < .001$) predicted older age of the celebrity. These regression results partially support the third hypothesis.

Discussion

As predicted, individuals report greater PSI than identification for their favorite celebri-

Table 1
Logistic Regression Results for Choosing Female Celebrities

Predictor	B	SE	Wald	df	Significance	Exp(B)
CPI	.07	.02	14.77	1	.000*	1.074
CPPI	-.05	.02	5.53	1	.019*	.951
Participant gender	2.17	.47	21.07	1	.000**	8.711
Constant	-2.74	.96	8.21	1	.004	.064

Note. CPI = Celebrity-Persona Identification Score; CPPI = Celebrity-Persona Parasocial Interaction Score.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .001$.

ties. This makes sense in that PSI has been described as a normal part of social activity (Giles, 2002; Horton & Wohl, 1956); however, it is less common for individuals to identify with celebrities, such as wanting to model the values and behaviors of their favorite celebrity (Brown & de Matviuk, 2010) or having emotional and cognitive connections with the favorite celebrity beyond the TV show, movie, or event (Cohen, 2001). Although these findings replicate findings of previous studies, the present study's findings are novel in that previous studies have not examined PSI and identification for favorite celebrities that the participant chooses. Results also partially support the second hypothesis that participant characteristics relate to favorite celebrity characteristics. Specifically, males were more like to choose male celebrities as their favorite but females chose female celebrities slightly more often than male celebrities, which previous studies have also shown (Hoffner, 1996). In addition, age was related to choice of celebrity, which has been supported by other research (Harwood, 1999). However, participant ethnicity did not associate with choice of celebrity based on ethnicity.

Gender and age appear to be more salient in choice of favorite celebrity figures, but the lack of support for the role of participant ethnicity on celebrity choice based on ethnicity may indicate that the similarity-attraction principle is limited in the type of physical characteristics that influence choice of celebrity. Specifically, the findings in the present study could be a result of media bias in presenting European American/White celebrities over non-White figures. For example, Ducille (2001) suggests that stereotypes in movies and TV have created representations of certain ethnic groups that are difficult defy. Specifically, non-White characters, particularly African Americans, have been portrayed as villains, drug dealers, or gang members (Ducille, 2001). In contrast, White characters are portrayed as heroes or powerful leaders. Ducille's (2001) argument points to a limitation in the similarity-attraction principle because non-White participants who should choose non-White media figures do not choose same-ethnicity figures due to their negative portrayals in the media.

Finally, results from the third hypothesis tests demonstrate that fewer PSIs, greater celebrity identification, and being a female fan significantly predicted choosing a female celebrity. Also, fewer PSI, greater celebrity identification, and older participant age predicted choosing an older celebrity. These findings support previous research that similarity characteristics relate to celebrity identification (Hoffner, 1996; Hoffner & Buchanan, 2005; Liss, 1981). But for older participants and female participants, PSIs may not have as much to do with similarity (Dibble & Rosaen, 2011). Studies have shown younger fans (Theran et al., 2010) and male fans (Brown & de Matviuk, 2010) have greater PSIs with media figures who are younger or male. But the findings from the present study emphasize the importance of further examining gender, ethnicity, and age factors in choice of older celebrities and female celebrities, which have not been researched in combination.

Strengths and Limitations

A strength of the present study was the large number and variety of celebrities reported by participants (celebrity $n = 132$), which allows for generalizability of findings to all types of celebrities (e.g., athletes, singers, actors, writers). Unlike other studies of celebrity attitudes that target one particular celebrity or media figure (Fong & Wyer, 2012; Hoffner, 1996; Hoffner & Buchanan, 2005), this study asked participants to focus on their favorite celebrity, which is a strength in that identification, PSIs, and similarity characteristics can be measured more accurately. Another strength of the study is that the sample was ethnically diverse, with >40% being Latino/Hispanic.

A limitation in the present study is that the reasons why participants chose their favorite celebrity were not explored. Although it would be ideal to ask participants to explain why they like a particular celebrity or media figure, the difficulty in ascertaining why they chose who they chose is that participants may not really know. Attitudes can be in complex in structure and they can vary in importance, strength, and accessibility (Fiske, 2014), and thus reasons for attitudes may be difficult to determine. Also, a limitation of the present

study is that the sample consisted of college students who resided in Southern California, most of whom were female. The findings would certainly be impacted if the sample were more representative of other regions in the country, of other age-groups, of individuals who do not have a college education, and included more males. Finally, an important limitation to mention is that the findings demonstrate that measures used for CPI and CPPI have strong convergent validity (i.e., strong positive correlation; Schweizer, 2012) but the authors of the measures purport that CPI and CPPI measure different constructs (Bocarnea & Brown, 2007; Brown & Bocarnea, 2007). Further psychometric analysis of these measures is recommended.

Future Directions and Implications

In addition to addressing some of the limitations mentioned above, future research should consider exploring other celebrity characteristics that may predict liking or favoring of a celebrity, such as type of celebrity (movie actors, singers, athletes, writers, etc.), how long the individual has favored the celebrity, and whether individuals have more than one favorite. Also, other similarity characteristics were not explored, such as personality, family histories, hobbies, and interests. Furthermore, future studies could utilize both quantitative and qualitative methodologies to gather more detailed information regarding why fans like the celebrities they like.

The implications from these findings can inform people in the celebrity business (i.e., managers, agents, advertisers, etc.) that fans do not necessarily favor celebrities who are similar to them physically. Many participants chose celebrities who did not match them on age or ethnicity factors. Also, female participants chose male and female celebrities almost equally. This information is important in that considering target audiences' age and ethnicity may not be as important as considering audience gender, at least for male spectators. Furthermore, celebrities may be favored for reasons other than what they look like physically. The celebrities' credibility, talents, values, and family backgrounds may be more important to consider when marketing the celebrity as spokespersons or when

shaping the image of celebrities. For example, Chuang and Ding (2013) developed a measure of celebrity singer image and found that in addition to physical appearance (or what the researchers call *design*), other factors of the celebrity singer related to attachment to the celebrity, satisfaction with the celebrity image, trust in the credibility of the celebrity, and relationship commitment to the celebrity. These other factors include expertise in the medium (i.e., singing), versatility (e.g., being able to sing, dance, and act), and fame (i.e., what the researchers termed popularity and being well known). These types of factors could also be explored in future research regarding favorite celebrities.

Furthermore, it would be of interest to celebrities, their managers, and their agents to consider whether similarity features and identification with celebrities can buffer negative media attention. For example, Fong and Wyer (2012) studied the effects of a sex scandal on celebrity endorsements among college students in Hong Kong. They found that fans of the celebrity in question had less of an attitude change than individuals who did not like the celebrity before the sex scandal. Specifically, although fans who liked the celebrity changed to more negative opinions following the scandal, this change was not as large as the change of individuals who disliked the celebrity. Thus, liking (whether due to identification, PSIs, or similarity) can buffer some of the negative effects of a scandal for celebrities.

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